“UNPAID CARERS ARE NOT UNSUNG HEROES. WE ARE FORGOTTEN, NEGLECTED AND BURNT OUT”

WALES BRIEFING

SEPTEMBER 2023

CARERS TRUST WALES
We need validation, recognition and support for what we do. We save the NHS and Government money, and it’s time we saw that put back into decent local services we can access quickly and easily."

This Wales briefing identifies recommendations and actions that will enable Welsh Government, statutory services, decision makers and other stakeholders in Wales to respond to our UK-wide survey findings.

It complements our UK-wide report, which tells a story of unpaid carers who, despite everything they do to prop up our creaking health and social care systems, feel ignored and undervalued. It also uncovers how these same carers, through no fault of their own, are struggling to navigate an overly complex system of support that is supposed to be there to help them.

The UK report is based on the findings of a survey completed by 3,430 unpaid carers aged over 18 between 12 May 2023 to 11 June 2023. The survey was designed with a group of Lived Experience Advisors who codesigned the survey questions.
Unpaid carers are not getting the support they need. Within our survey, we found:

1 in 4 unpaid carers (25%) said they were the sole providers of care and that they didn’t receive help to care from anyone else.

Only 55% of unpaid carers said they got the support they need to be a carer.

Under half of unpaid carers (43%) said that in the last year, they had an assessment, review or reassessment of their needs as an unpaid carer.

Only 32% of unpaid carers said they could access a break from their caring role whenever needed.

Only 38% of respondents said carer’s allowance was enough to make a meaningful difference to them. This was the lowest rating of all the benefits we asked unpaid carers about.
Unpaid carers are not unsung heroes. We are forgotten, neglected and burnt out.

36% disagreed or strongly disagreed that the NHS understands their caring responsibilities and they have received appropriate support. Unpaid carers told us they are not being recognised as experts in the planning and delivery of care for both them and the person they care for.

When we asked what support unpaid carers need, they told us:

1. Better support for the person or people they care for
2. A break or respite
3. More money to spend on what they need for their caring role.
1. **The Welsh Government must prioritise and sustainably fund unpaid carer support as part of the wider health and social care sector**

   - Regional Partnership Board funding towards unpaid carer support under the Regional Integration Fund should be monitored and reported against.
   
   - Local authority social care funding must be sufficient to meet local authority statutory needs to carers under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 including the timely delivery of Support Plans as well as broader wellbeing and preventative services for unpaid carers.

2. **Welsh Government and wider statutory stakeholders must continue to prioritise the identification of unpaid carers**

   - Welsh Government must continue to monitor the impact of delivery against Priority 1: Identifying and valuing unpaid carers as part of reporting on the Strategy for Unpaid Carers.
     
     - This should include delivery against an ongoing communications campaign to raise awareness of identifying as an unpaid carer and carers’ rights.
   
   - Local Health Boards and local authorities must continue to engage with the Carer Aware project, which is a Welsh Government partnership between Carers Trust Wales and Carers Wales aiming to transform recognition and support for unpaid carers in health and social care settings, to facilitate the identification of unpaid carers at key points in their experience.

3. **National and local government must ensure effective community provision for unpaid carers**

   - Welsh Government must act on the findings of the current national review of Carers Needs Assessments in Wales and publish an action plan to address challenges and gaps identified by the report in access to timely and meaningful assessments.
   
   - Better partnership working between local authorities, statutory services, local carer organisations and unpaid carers must be established.
Local authorities should be supported and encouraged to work with their local carer organisation to improve the referral pathway for carer’s needs assessments. Where appropriate, this may be through commissioning the local carer organisation to act as the local authority carer’s needs assessment provider.

Welsh Government and Carers Trust should monitor the impact and reach of the new Short Breaks Scheme to ensure it achieves its aim of increasing access to short breaks for unpaid carers from all areas of Wales through Regional Partnership Board and Amser funded projects.

Regional Partnership Boards in partnership with Carers Trust should work collaboratively with local short breaks providers, both funded directly by them and through the Amser programme, to ensure there is equitable coverage to meet the needs of diverse carers identified within their Population Needs Assessment.

All stakeholders should work collaboratively to promote awareness of the Short Breaks scheme amongst unpaid carers.

Health Boards, Local authorities and Regional Partnership Boards should ensure that upcoming strengthened regulations under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 around co-production with unpaid carers are adhered to.

Learning from the Triangle of Care model which sets out standards for better collaboration and partnership with carers should be considered.

The involvement of unpaid carer representatives within Regional Partnership Boards and other statutory services should be meaningful and supported.
4. National and local government and the wider health and social care sector must ensure the specific needs of unpaid carers from diverse demographic groups are understood and met

- In line with the Welsh Government’s Priority 1 of the Strategy for Unpaid Carers, Welsh Government should continue to prioritise the identification of, and engagement with, unpaid carers from minoritised groups under-represented in services. A continued and proactive approach to engaging with carers from under-represented groups will support greater shaping of inclusive services and policy development.

- Regional Partnership Boards should respond to the diverse needs identified within their Population Needs Assessments as part of developing their support for unpaid carers in their forthcoming Area Plans.


- Welsh Government and local authority social services should monitor the implementation of the Active Offer of Welsh language assessment and services to ensure that Welsh speaking carers are able to access support in their language of choice.

5. The Welsh Government must continue to exercise their powers to ensure that unpaid carers are not pushed into poverty

- The Carers Support Fund, administered by Carers Trust, is a vital source of additional financial support for unpaid carers as well as funding the development of services that aim to improve financial resilience amongst carers. Continued support and promotion of this fund will enable it to achieve the greatest impact for unpaid carers in financial hardship.

- The Welsh Government must use their devolved powers to reform carers’ finance, and also encourage the UK Government to reform Carer’s Allowance, to ensure a fair deal for unpaid carers.

- Unpaid carers value, and rely on, additional sources of financial support from Welsh Government beyond that delivered by the UK Government social security and welfare benefits system. Following the model of the Carer’s Allowance Supplement implemented by Scottish Government prior to the devolution of social security, Welsh Government should consider allocating ongoing supplementary support, in line with the precedent of the £500 allocated to carers in 2022.
6. The Welsh Government must support unpaid carers to get into or stay in work

- Through a social partnership approach, the Welsh Government should support employers in Wales to implement the Carer’s Leave Act when it comes into effect and to encourage public sector employers to implement broader carer-friendly policies.

- Welsh Government should promote the development and commissioning of specialist carer employability programmes that offer holistic, individually tailored support, enabling it to deliver against Priority 4 of the Strategy for Unpaid Carers.
Carers Trust works to transform the lives of unpaid carers. In Wales it partners with its network of local carer organisations to provide funding and support, deliver innovative and evidence-based programmes, raise awareness, and influence policy. Carers Trust's vision is that unpaid carers are heard and valued, with access to support, advice and resources to enable them to live fulfilled lives.
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